

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

POST MAY 20 1976

EVENING - 598,512

WEEKEND - 370,926

The Arms Plague

With plans going forward to inoculate millions against a deadly strain of flu, it is a pity no comparable means are at hand for immunizing national leaders against a deadlier disorder: the arms plague. Instead, the disorder seems to be more contagious than ever.

The Central Intelligence Agency has identified what seems to be an unusually virulent outbreak in the Soviet Union. The agency reports Moscow may have been spending twice as much on armaments as initially estimated by the West; the CIA now figures that the Russians spent between 50 and 55 billion rubles on defense last year.

That is no justification for a fresh

Pentagon demand for a doubled U. S. defense budget. As Sen. Proxmire (D-Wis.) points out in interpreting the CIA data: "The Russians are spending more rubles than we thought because they are more inefficient and wasteful than we thought."

CIA Director Bush puts in this way: "... the analysis does not indicate that the Soviets have any more weapons or manpower than previously estimated but that the cost of these defense programs is greater than we originally had estimated."

If the Russians are wasting money on military madness, are we obliged to imitate them?